

Wednesday, June 22, 2005

Duxbury Clipper

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## Alden Chimney Swept up in Renovation

By LAUREN GRILLI

For a house to withstand nearly 350 years of New England winters without indoor plumbing or electricity – and still remain standing – is an impressive accomplishment. It's even more impressive when the house, which remained a lived-in home until the mid-1920s, was residence to two famous pilgrims and many of their descendants.

The Alden House, which was John and Priscilla Alden's home during the mid-1600s, is now a walk-through museum. Although the actual house remains in excellent condition, the chimney, which has been crumbling, has seen better days.

Beginning June 13, a team of six masons from Williamsburg, Virginia, have been working to restore the chimney to its original state. Under the supervision of master mason Jack F. Peet, an expert in the restoration of historical brickwork, and in consultation with Williard E. Gwilliam, who is the former director of architecture, engineering, and maintenance at Colonial Williamsburg, the masons have been rebuilding

the chimney brick by brick.

"The restoration is important for two reasons," said Gwilliam. "First is the safety issue. Second, we're concerned about the deterioration of the chimney."

Gwilliam is a member of The Alden Kindred of America, which is financing the presumed \$80,000 project. The Kindred is an organization of descendants of John and Priscilla Alden that provides the preservation and upkeep of the Alden House and its history.

"This is the only house left standing in the Plymouth area that was built, lived in, and still owned by the same family," said Alden "Rink" Rinquist of the Alden Kindred. "It's one of the oldest houses in Duxbury. This is where Duxbury's history started."

In the 1930s, the outside of the chimney was parged, or plastered over, according to Gwilliam, who is directing the project. During the past few winters, pieces of the parging have been falling off the chimney and down the roof. Similarly, chunks of brick and mortar have been falling down though the fireplaces inside the house.

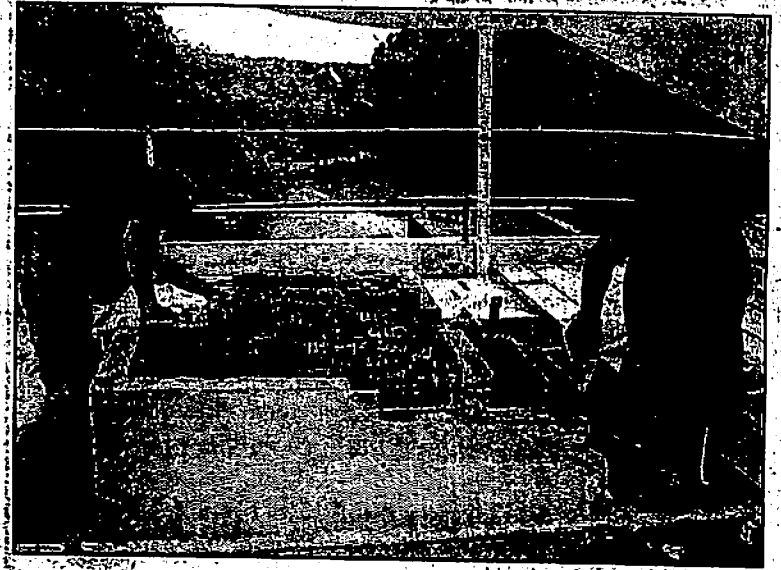
Picking up a chunk of parging that had fallen down the side of the roof, Peet explained that the old brick was of a softer material than the parging or the mortar.

"You can see where the brick came off with the parging," he said, pointing to where the piece of soft red brick stuck to the gray speckled plaster.

The chimney was originally built with two kinds of mortar, according to Peet. The part of the chimney that is not exposed to the elements was constructed with clay mortar, which is made out of dirt. Lime mortar, made from oyster or clam shells, holds the bricks in place on the outside, above the roof, where the chimney is exposed.

"There are two sides to restoration – there's the fancy side you see in the magazines and then there's the side of those in the trenches," said Gwilliam.

After spending time with those who work in the trenches, it becomes clear that the restoration of historical brickwork is a passion and a commitment. For hour after hour, the masons delicately chip away at the disintegrating



Architect William E. Gwilliam (left) inspects the chimney while mason Andre Holloway disassembles the bricks.

brick, mortar, and parging of the exposed chimney. Then, they reuse the bricks to rebuild the chimney with hydraulic lime, which is a newer, naturally occurring, softer mortar, according to Peet.

The scaffolding on which the masons are working is almost as impressive as the house itself. The wood on the roof is so old that Gwilliam was nervous to have six men standing up there. The scaffolding is supported from three points around the house so that no part of the structure, nor any worker, is on the roof.

One new feature that the masons will be adding is a damper, a flat piece of metal that can either block off the top of the chimney or let air flow through it, operated by a stainless steel cable on the first floor. Dampers are not typical of houses built in the 1600s, but the architectural benefits outweigh the anachronism, said Peet.

The Alden House Museum remained open throughout the duration of the project, which was completed by June 21, a full week prior to what was expected.